

March/April Open House Final Public Meeting Summary

Michigan Department of Transportation State Long Range Transportation Plan 2005 - 2030



**Prepared for
The Michigan Department
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Executive Summary

This report summarizes public input collected for the Michigan State Long Range Transportation Plan (MI Transportation Plan). The open houses are the first in a series of two rounds of public meetings for the MI Transportation Plan.

After reviewing the results of the open houses and related activities it was determined that participants identified the following as the top key attributes for a future transportation system;

- Sustainability;
- Choice; and
- Safe.

Participants were given an opportunity to allocate dollars among transportation categories that they felt needed the most attention. The top choices of the allocation game were:

- Local transit;
- Maintaining and preserving the existing road system; and
- Improving/expanding the road system.

A comparison with what was heard in 2001 during the development of MDOT's current plan, *State Long Range Plan 2000-2025 – Mobility is Security*, shows similarities. Participants at both the 2001 and 2006 public meetings stated that there was a great need for better preservation of the existing roadway network and transportation facilities. Participants want to see more money spent on existing roads than on the construction of new roads. Comments from both rounds of meetings also voiced a need for better transportation services coordination and more transit choice.

While there are many similarities between the 2001 and 2006 statewide long range transportation planning meetings and their results, it should be noted that they can not be compared exactly because planning activities and meetings for each were conducted in different locations and meeting formats varied.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This report documents the public participation process and public input collected for the Michigan State Long Range Transportation Plan (MI Transportation Plan) open houses held during the weeks of March 27, April 1, and April 17, 2006. All open houses had the same set-up, display boards, PowerPoint presentation, and informational materials.

The open houses are the first in a series of two rounds of public meetings for the MI Transportation Plan. During each round, public meetings will take place in different locations to allow greater participation across the state.

The purposes of the open houses were to:

- Inform and educate the public about the vision developed with input from the Economic Advisory Group (EAG) meetings, stakeholder interviews, stakeholder workshops, the Transportation Summit, and household participation studies; and
- Receive public input and comment on the vision, transportation strategies and goals identified during EAG meetings, stakeholder interviews, stakeholder workshops, the Transportation Summit, and household participation studies.

The following outreach activities publicized these open houses:

- A press release for each individual open house location;
- Open house information, including locations and dates, posted on the project Web site;
- Open house flyers mailed to approximately 900 stakeholders; and
- Open house flyers e-mailed to numerous stakeholders and transit providers.

The press releases and open house flyer are included in Appendix B of this document.

Chapter 2. Open House Format

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) held 12 open houses for the MI Transportation Plan at strategic locations across the state:

- East Lansing
- Bay City
- Kalamazoo
- Ferndale
- Grand Rapids
- Dearborn
- Gaylord
- Alpena
- Champion
- Escanaba
- St. Ignace
- Ann Arbor

Figure 1 Public Meeting Locations First Round



Table 1. Open House Attendance by Location

<i>Location</i>	<i>Number of Attendees</i>
East Lansing	33
Bay City	25
Kalamazoo	45
Ferndale	31
Grand Rapids	16
Dearborn	19
Gaylord	18
Alpena	10
Champion	25
Escanaba	11
St. Ignace	8
Ann Arbor	30
Total	271

All open houses took place from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., except at the Champion location. The Champion Open House occurred from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in order to coordinate with the Ishpeming Transportation Service Center (TSC) Annual Open House. The MI Transportation Plan open house immediately followed the TSC presentation to the attendees.

Each open house was set up with seven stations organized as follows:

2.1 Station 1

At each location, participants signed in at Station 1 and received several items: a state highway map, a one-page (two-sided) handout, four green dots, \$100 (five \$20 bills) in play money, a name tag and project Web cards. The open house handout had an agenda on one side that explained what was expected of participants. The other side contained information on how to get involved in the planning process, including the Web site address, hotline number, details on how to register comments after the meetings, and the next steps in the process.

2.2 Station 2

Station 2 offered a 10 to 12 minute PowerPoint slide show with voiceover that provided background on the project, the schedule, and previous vision information.

2.3 Station 3

Station 3 consisted of two boards: one a project timeline and one illustrating the history of MDOT and the planning process to date.

2.4 Station 4

Station 4 offered three boards summarizing vision information and feedback gleaned from participation activities thus far (EAG meetings, stakeholder workshops, stakeholder interviews, and household participation studies).

2.5 Station 5

The interactive Station 5 comprised of several boards listing transportation strategy and goal statements. Participants could vote for up to four emphasis areas that they believed were important, using the four green dots they had received at Station 1. They also identified what they thought was important within the emphasis area by placing check marks next to the issues listed on each board. Participants could also add their own issues/areas of concerns on an easel pad. The voting conducted at Station 5 was the final public input into the visioning process.

2.6 Station 6—Allocation Game

As the public left, they could “spend \$100” (the five \$20 bills they had received at Station 1) in a number of specified transportation categories (e.g., aviation, improve/expand existing road system, ports, bike/pedestrian). Participants allocated their money to the categories they felt needed improvement. This playful activity generated information on which categories the public saw as needing attention and funding.

2.7 Station 7—Comment Station

At the comment station, attendees could fill out comment forms and provide their comments through CommentWorks.com. MDOT staff answered questions and assisted participants in using CommentWorks.com or filling out comment forms.

Chapter 3. Individual Open House Summaries

The sections below summarize each open house. Appendix A offers a detailed spreadsheet of all the data collected at the twelve open houses. Copies of all open house comment forms and CommentWorks comments are located in Appendix C for your reference.

3.1 East Lansing

The East Lansing open house took place on Tuesday, March 28, 2006, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the MDOT Transportation Service Center. The 33 people who attended, including representatives from regional planning and transit agencies, human service agencies, local media, and

groups serving the physically and mentally disabled, as well as students from nearby colleges and universities.

The local Center for Independent Living coordinated staff assistance and transportation for a group of ten mentally and physically handicapped individuals to attend the open house. These individuals stayed for most of the open house and provided specific input on their current transportation challenges.

Attendees chose *safe*, *sustainability*, and *choice* as key attributes for a future transportation system. Under the category of *safe*, they were concerned about pedestrian travel, bicycle access, and improved infrastructure. In terms of *sustainability*, they voiced a need for better jurisdictional coordination and cooperation on land use decisions that affect transportation, and better community planning to design/minimize sprawl. In terms of *choice*, attendees wanted innovative approaches to public transportation, additional multi-modal and connectivity among modes, and complete networks and connectivity between modes.

When allocating their \$100 to the transportation categories at Station 6, attendees favored the categories of *local transit* and *intercity transit*.

3.2 Bay City

The Bay City open house was held on Tuesday, March 28, 2006, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Delta College Planetarium. The 25 attendees included representatives from local transit agencies, local and county elected officials, rail/trail and bicycle advocates, and interested residents.

Bay City attendees identified *sustainability*, *choice*, and *affordability* as top attributes for a future transportation system. Under the category of *sustainability*, they identified the ability to maintain what is built and better jurisdictional coordination and cooperation on land use decisions that affect transportation as key issues. In terms of *choice*, attendees selected innovative approaches to public transportation, larger transit service areas/regional travel and multi-modalism, and connectivity among modes as key issues. Under *affordability*, attendees primarily identified better accessibility to employment as a key issue.

At Station 6 participants allocated the highest amount of money to *maintaining and preserving the existing roadway* and *local transit*.

3.3 Kalamazoo

The Kalamazoo open house took place on Wednesday, March 29, 2006, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Kalamazoo Chamber of Commerce. The 45 attendees included representatives from local transit agencies, human resource agencies, local and county government officials, chambers of commerce, and several local community organizations, as well as interested residents.

A number of attendees voiced concern about the ongoing US 131 project and submitted related comments. After review, the Project Team forwarded all US 131-related comments to MDOT for its use in relation to that project.

Kalamazoo attendees selected *sustainability*, *safe*, and *choice* as top attributes for a future transportation system. Under the category *sustainability*, attendees wanted minimal impact on the environment and better jurisdictional coordination and cooperation on land use decisions that affect transportation. In terms of *safe*, attendees identified improved infrastructure and access management as key issues. Under *choice*, attendees selected innovative approaches to public transportation and multi-modalism and connectivity among modes as key issues.

At Station 6 attendees allocated the highest amount of money to *maintaining and preserving the existing road system* and *improving/expanding the road system*.

3.4 Ferndale

The Ferndale open house was held on Wednesday, March 29, 2006, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Gerry Kulick Community Center. The 31 attendees included representatives from Chambers of Commerce, human resource agencies, several local and county government agencies, media representatives, and interested local residents.

Attendees identified *sustainability*, *choice*, and *affordability* as top attributes for a future transportation system.

Under the category of *choice*, key issues identified included larger transit service areas/regional travel, complete networks/connectivity, and innovative approaches to transportation. In terms of *affordability*, attendees wanted to see new funding options (tolls and user fees versus taxes) and better accessibility to jobs. Under *sustainability*, key issues included the ability to maintain what is built and better jurisdictional coordination and cooperation on land use decisions that affect transportation.

At Station 6 attendees allocated the highest amount of money to *local transit* and *intercity transit*.

3.5 Grand Rapids

The Grand Rapids open house took place on Thursday, March, 30, 2006, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Grand Rapids City/County Administration Building. The 16 attendees included local and county government officials, local bicycle and transit advocates, local media, representatives of human service agencies, and interested residents.

Attendees selected *sustainability*, *safe*, and *choice* as top attributes for a future transportation system. Under the category *sustainability*, key issues included minimal impact on the environment, better community design that minimizes sprawl, and better jurisdictional coordination and cooperation on land use decisions that affect transportation. Under *safe*, reduction of motor vehicle crashes and pedestrian travel were key concerns. In terms of *choice*, multi-modal

and connectivity among modes and innovative approaches to public transportation were identified as key issues.

When spending money at Station 6, attendees allocated the highest amount of money to *improve/expand the road system* and *local transit*.

3.6 Dearborn

The Dearborn open house was held on Thursday, March, 30, 2006, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Henry Ford Community College Administration Services Conference Center. The 19 attendees included local and county officials, environmental advocates, representatives from human resource agencies and local councils of aging, and interested local residents.

Attendees selected ***choice***, ***sustainability***, and ***reliability*** as top attributes for a future transportation system. In terms of ***choice***, key issues were innovative approaches to public transportation and multi-modalism and connectivity among modes. Under ***sustainability***, attendees chose the ability to maintain what is built and preservation of existing rail corridor rights-of-way for future trail and transit use. Under ***reliability***, attendees identified on-time performance and coordinated transfers between modes as key concerns.

At Station 6, attendees allocated the highest amount of money to the *local transit* and *intercity transit*.

3.7 Gaylord

The Gaylord open house took place on Monday, April 3, 2006, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the University Center. The 18 attendees included local and county officials, representatives from human resource agencies and local groups serving the physically and mentally disabled, and several interested residents.

The Gaylord attendees selected ***safe***, ***sustainability***, and ***choice*** as top attributes for a future transportation system. Under the category ***safe***, attendees selected reduction of motor vehicle crashes and pedestrian travel as key issues. In terms of ***sustainability***, better jurisdictional coordination and cooperation on land use decisions that affect transportation, preservation of existing rail corridor rights-of-way for future trail and transit use, and better community design/minimal sprawl were key concerns. Under ***choice***, attendees identified complete networks and connectivity, multi-modalism and connectivity among modes, and innovative approaches to public transit as key issues.

At Station 6, participants allocated the highest amount of money to *local transit*, *bicycles and pedestrians*, and *intercity transit*.

3.8 Alpena

The Alpena open house was held on Tuesday, April 4, 2006, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Alpena-Montmorency-Alcona Educational Service District. The 10 participants included city

and county government officials, representatives from groups serving the mentally and physically disabled, and several interested residents.

Attendees selected **sustainability**, **choice**, and **reliability** as top attributes for a future transportation system. Under **sustainability**, attendees selected the ability to maintain what is built and the preservation of existing rail corridor right-of-way for future trail and transit use. Under **choice**, attendees identified complete networks/connectivity, service frequency, and larger transit service area/regional travel as key issues. In terms of **reliability**, participants selected on-time performance, predictable, and responsive as key issues.

At Station 6, attendees allocated the highest amount of money to ***maintaining and preserving the existing road system*** and ***local transit***.

3.9 Champion

The Champion open house was held on Wednesday, April 5, 2006, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Wawonowin Country Club in order to coordinate with the Ishpeming Transportation Service Center (TSC) Annual Open House. The MI Transportation Plan open house immediately followed the TSC presentation to attendees. A total of 25 people attended this open house. Due to the fact that this meeting was coordinated with the TSC open house, most attendees were transportation stakeholders, including city and county government officials, road commissioners, and representatives from local police associations and transit authorities.

Champion open house attendees selected **sustainability**, **safe**, and **reliability** as top attributes for a future transportation system. Under the category **sustainability**, participants identified the ability to maintain what is built and better community design/minimal sprawl as key issues. Under **safe**, key issues were reduction of motor vehicle crashes, access management, and improved infrastructure. In terms of reliability, snow removal and construction projects were identified as key issues.

At Station 6, attendees allocated the highest amount of money to ***maintaining and preserving the existing road system***, ***improving/expanding the road system***, and ***local transit***.

3.10 Escanaba

The Escanaba open house took place on Wednesday, April 5, 2006, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the conference room of Escanaba City Hall. The 11 attendees included local and county government officials, representatives from human resource agencies, local groups serving the physically and mentally disabled, and interested residents.

Attendees selected **efficiency and convenience**, **affordability**, and **safe** as top attributes for a future transportation system. Under the category of **efficiency and convenience**, attendees identified the provision of passing lanes and accommodation of all levels of movement of people and goods as key issues. Under **affordability**, attendees selected cheaper fuel taxes, reasonable intercity fares, reasonable urban fares, and funding options as key issues. In terms of **safe**, attendees selected bus stops as the primary issue.

At Station 6, attendees allocated the highest amount of money to *improving and expanding the road system* and *local transit*.

3.11 St. Ignace

The St. Ignace open house was held on Thursday April 6, 2006, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Quality Inn. The eight attendees included local and county government officials, representatives from local groups serving the physically and mentally disabled, representatives from the media, and interested residents.

St. Ignace attendees selected *choice*, *affordability*, and *reliability* as top attributes for a future transportation system. Under the category *choice*, attendees identified barrier-free access and transfer, service frequency, complete networks/connectivity, and innovative approaches to public transit as key issues. In terms of *affordability*, attendees wanted cheaper fuel taxes, better accessibility to jobs, and more travel choices. Under *reliability*, attendees selected on-time performance and snow removal as key issues.

At Station 6, participants allocated the highest amount of money to *maintaining and preserving the existing road system* and *local transit*.

3.12 Ann Arbor

The Ann Arbor open house was held on Thursday April 20, 2006 from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Washtenaw Community College. This open house was held in partnership with the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS). The 30 attendees included local, county, and state government officials, local groups representing the physically and mentally disabled, representatives from community groups, and interested residents.

Ann Arbor attendees selected *sustainable*, *choice* and *safe* as top attributes for a future transportation system. Under the category of *sustainable*, attendees identified better jurisdictional coordination and cooperation on land use decisions that affect transportation, better community design/minimize sprawl, the preservation of existing rail corridor right-of-way for future trail, and transit use as key issues. In terms of *choice*, attendees selected complete networks and multimodalism and connectivity among modes as key issues. Under the category *safe*, attendees identified trains, bicycle access, and pedestrian travel as areas of concern.

At Station 6, participant allocated the highest amount of money to *intercity transit, bicycles and pedestrians* and *maintaining and preserving the existing road system*.

Chapter 4. Overall Open House Summary

After reviewing the results of the open houses, the Project Team found that attendees selected *sustainability*, *choice*, and *safe* as the top attributes for a future transportation system.

Under the category *sustainability*, participants identified the ability to maintain what is built, better community design/minimal sprawl, and better jurisdictional coordination and cooperation on land-use decisions that affect transportation as key issues.

In terms of *choice*, participants selected innovative approaches to public transportation, complete networks/connectivity, and larger transit service areas/regional travel as key issues.

Under the category *safe*, reduction of motor vehicle crashes and pedestrian travel were identified as the top two issues of concern.

Station 5 results varied little from location to location. The St. Ignace open house results did show a stronger concern for affordability and reliability, but this could also be skewed by the fact that only eight people attended.

Participants identified several additional top key issues in different categories, including better access to jobs (*affordability*) and on-time performance (*reliability*).

At Station 6, open house participants allocated the highest amount of money to *local transit*, followed by *maintaining and preserving the existing road system*, and *improving/expanding the road system*. The categories that received the lowest amount of money were aviation, ports, and freight.

On the open house comment forms, commenters also voiced the need for additional local transit services—longer hours of transit service, transit service to more locations, and larger transit service areas that cross county lines.

4.1 Open House Comment Comparison

After reviewing the comments from the 2001 State Long Range Plan Public Meetings the Project Team found that there were several similarities between comments received in 2001 and 2006.

In 2001, participants' key messages/comments were grouped into eight key message categories:

- Basic Mobility
- Environmental &Aesthetics
- Intermodalism
- Land Use Coordination
- Preservation
- Safety
- Strengthening the State's Economy
- Transportation Service Coordination

The key message areas that received the most comments from meeting participants in 2001 were *intermodalism*, *preservation*, and *transportation service coordination*.

Under the topic *intermodalism* participants commented that better connections to air, intercity bus, and intercity rail systems are needed; including upgraded facilities and improved non-motorized facilities and trails.

There were also a large number of comments submitted under the topic of *preservation*. Under preservation participants wanted asset management efforts to continue and transportation corridors to be preserved or developed.

Under *transportation services coordination* participants provided comments requesting a unified transit system providing urban to rural, county to county, private sector and public sector, and among providing agencies. Participants also commented about improving coordination and communication between state, county and local jurisdictions.

The key concerns of meeting participants in 2001 were focused around transportation service and coordination and preservation, there was little comment or concern about land use coordination. In 2006, land use was a key issue for many participants, especially residents of rural and suburban areas experiencing rapid population growth. Participants expressed that they would like to see better linkage between transportation and land use in the coming years.

Participants at both the 2001 and 2006 public meetings stated that there was a great need for better preservation of the existing roadway network and transportation facilities. Participants want to see more money spent on existing roads than on the construction of new roads. It was noted at both rounds of meetings that the building of new roads should only take place in areas where they are really needed.

Comments from both rounds of meetings also voiced a need for better transportation services coordination and more transit choice. Participants requested longer hours of service, service to more areas, and improved coordination between transit providers.

While there are many similarities between the 2001 and 2006 Statewide Long Range Transportation Planning meeting comments, it should be noted that the results can not be compared exactly because planning activities and meetings for each were conducted in different locations and meeting formats varied.

4.2 Conclusion

We heard the voice of the public during the first round of open houses. Comments collected from participants and through CommentWorks and the project Web site will be incorporated by the Project Team and Economic Advisory Group in the Preferred Vision for an Integrated Transportation System, and other technical analyses and reports.

The open houses provided the project team with new insights regarding the vision, transportation strategies and goals identified during EAG meetings, stakeholder workshops, the Transportation Summit, and household participation studies. This process also provided a diverse comprehensive list of interested participants and organizations to include in project outreach and on the project contact list.

The MI Transportation Plan will provide a comprehensive picture of the state of the transportation system shaped by what we have heard from the public, input from MDOT and the results of the technical analysis.